



THE HUMANE SOCIETY
OF THE UNITED STATES

Testimony in opposition to: HB 4251
Committee: House Criminal Justice
Date: March 24, 2015

On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS) and our many members and constituents in Michigan, I ask that you oppose HB 4251.

While the pictures we see of baby chicks, rabbits, or ducklings dyed bright colors may look cute, the dyeing process can be stressful for young animals and is widely considered inhumane. We are fortunate that this practice has long been prohibited in our state. But HB 4251 would repeal that prohibition and allow this practice to resume. This is taking us in the wrong direction with regard to animal welfare in our state. There is no compelling reason to repeal legislation that was created to protect animals, just for the purpose of generating revenue for a small number of vendors.

Each spring, the HSUS and countless other animal welfare groups urge the public to make the humane choice and refrain from acquiring live chicks and rabbits as Easter gifts, and to consider giving children a plush toy or a chocolate rabbit instead. We acknowledge that rabbits—and chickens—can make wonderful companions, but those adorable babies grow up quickly into adults that will need proper socialization, care, and companionship for many years. The decision to take a new pet into the household is a serious one, and it should not be based on an impulse buy when standing in front of a display of unnaturally-colored animals.

After cats and dogs, rabbits are the animals most frequently surrendered to animal shelters, largely because people acquire them when they are very young but aren't prepared for the long-term commitment involved. Some are simply released into backyards by people who mistakenly believe they will be able to fend for themselves. Unlike wild rabbits, domestic pet rabbits cannot survive on their own outdoors. Chickens also need dedicated, consistent care and far too many of them end up in shelters, rescues and sanctuaries as well.

According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development's 2013 Animal Shelter Activity reports, nearly 900 rabbits were surrendered to Michigan shelters, and nearly 300 were not adopted into new homes. The adoptable pet website Petfinder.com indicates that there are currently over 4,500 rabbits available for adoption in Michigan. Our state's farm animal and waterfowl rescue groups and sanctuaries must also deal with an influx of unwanted ducklings and chicks after the Easter season.

We ask that you reject HB 4251 to avoid placing even more stress on Michigan shelters, sanctuaries, and rescue groups that are already overburdened with homeless animals. Thank you for your consideration.

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